

EXTRA CREDIT

A SUMMER & WINTER SESSIONS PODCAST

Episode 4 Transcript

00:00:02 Introduction

Welcome to Extra Credit, hosted by the Rutgers University Office of Summer and Winter Sessions. Listen to hear from students as they share their experiences at Rutgers and some tips on how to navigate a condensed semester. Also gain the perspective of professors and learn more about the courses they teach.

00:00:18 Kylie

Thank you for coming to our Microcast. Can I ask you to introduce yourself please?

00:00:24 Martin Smith

Sure, my name is Martin Smith and I'm a professor at Rutgers University.

00:00:31 Kylie

Awesome, so I hear you'll be teaching a summer course, can you tell me a little bit about it?

00:00:36 Martin Smith

It's a course in topics in world languages and the title of the course is Teaching Content Lessons from Dual Language Immersion, so in the course what we'll be doing is looking at the literature around teaching in immersion settings and then use the lens to be able to determine how we could use that information to teach in any world languages classroom.

00:01:01 Kylie

So, can you walk me through the process behind developing this course? Why do you think it's necessary? Why do you think it's needed?

00:01:10 Martin Smith

Well, I think it's needed, first off because there is no course like this being offered currently as far as I know in New Jersey and in fact, there are very few courses, like this across the country.

00:01:23 Martin Smith

But in my own journey over the decades in the area of world languages, I became more and more interested in dual language immersion.

00:01:32 Martin Smith

I first heard about it back at the in the 90s. When I was tasked with being able to put together an elementary language program. And while the program I was putting together at that time was not an immersion program, in putting together that program I started to visit programs- visited some immersion programs and it really sparked my interest in wanting to understand it better, so I started reading, I started studying, I started looking at programs more often.

00:02:00 Martin Smith

And then just over the decades, I just became more and more interested in that to the point where in my last full-time job, I was the assistant Superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the school district. And I worked with the Board of Education to ultimately implement a dual language immersion program in both Chinese and Spanish.

00:02:20 Martin Smith

So, I've gone from studying it because I thought we could learn a lot about it, to actually implementing the program.

00:02:29 Kylie

So how does the program work exactly? So, what makes it different than, say you know your one-off English course or something?

00:02:38 Martin Smith

So rather than it being a one-off course where you're studying the language as a part of study – in a dual language class, you're studying your content areas such as Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, Art, whatever the content area is but using the language as the means to access the content within that area and language acquisition, then develops as a natural process out of that.

00:03:04 Martin Smith

So, learning how to make all of that content comprehensible is something that we can leverage within our world languages classrooms to be able to do a better job in developing our student's language proficiency.

00:03:19 Kylie

Right, right.

00:03:20 Kylie

Well, that's really interesting, that's cool. A lot of work, I'm sure, but good for you for pursuing and you know, keep going forward.

00:03:28 Martin Smith

A lot of fun work [laughs].

00:03:30 Kylie

So, what would you say students taking this course? What would the main takeaway be for them, do you think?

00:03:38 Martin Smith

Well, what I'm hoping is that one, they'll become more conversant with the literature in the area of dual language immersion and how teachers who work in that do the work that they do.

00:03:49 Martin Smith

So that they could leverage it in their regular world language classrooms and therefore improve the quality of instruction.

00:03:59 Kylie

Wow, it sounds very interesting.

00:04:01 Martin Smith

Teaching of languages has always been a tremendous passion that I've had in my life so. Well, yes, it can be looked at as a lot of work at the same time because I'm so passionate about bringing the ability to speak other languages to students.

00:04:17 Martin Smith

Um, and it's been a driving passion of my entire life. It's really when all is said and done it's- it feeds the soul and it's just fun to do so. It's work, but at the same time, it's the work you want to do.

00:04:32 Kylie

Uhm, so with COVID and you know, everything being remote, what would some advice you would give to promote good communication in a remote environment, say between you and your students?

00:04:44 Martin Smith

One of the things that I learned— I taught a course last summer online for the first time, fully online. And one of the things I learned is at times, you have to give up a little bit of the content within the course to be able to spend some time developing cohesion and relationships among the students, and yourself and the students within the class.

00:05:07 Martin Smith

And at times, we tend to be driven by the content, like "I need to cover this and I need to cover that."

00:05:12 Martin Smith

But one of the things I've really learned is that if you don't have the connections with your students. The learning is never going to stick.

00:05:19 Martin Smith

So I've learned to give up some of the content in order to make sure that we have strong connections.

00:05:27 Kylie

I can totally see how that would apply. Yeah, I've never heard of professors say that, like just off the bat, they're usually more content driven.

00:05:35 Martin Smith

Yeah, well. Content matters and I- you know, I have this passion for dual language immersion, so I'll stay focused on that.

00:05:41 Martin Smith

But you know, to me, it's not about how much material you cover but rather that what you do cover you cover well. And I've just always learned that if you don't have strong relationships and the students don't connect to the material and to the people within the class, it ultimately doesn't really stick and people don't do anything with it.

00:06:03 Martin Smith

And to me, to take a course simply for the sake of taking a course and getting the credits and getting a degree isn't worthwhile. I'm very pragmatic in that sense to me if you're working full time

00:06:16 Martin Smith

And then you're taking a course that you're hoping will get you better at that job, it better get you better at that job or it wasn't worth the investment of time.

00:06:24 Kylie

Right.

00:06:26 Outro

Thanks for listening and we'll catch you next time on Extra Credit.